melbourne black

A Journal of Melbourne Anarchy

Volume 1, Number 3, June 2010.

PASSPORTS FOR THE MERAK REFUGEES BY REBECCA & SEAMUS ____ 02
THE MAY DAY HOUSING ACTION BY C.I.O. ____ 04
A HISTORY OF SQUATTING CAMPAIGNS IN MELBOURNE BY IAIN MCINTYRE ____ 06
KULON PROGO BY MEAL ____ 14
W.S.N. BY CONAL ____ 16
I.D.A.H.O. AND OTHER STUFF BY BENNY RUDEBOY ____ 20
NOTES FROM CAMP EUREKA BY SEAMUS ____ 22
EDUCATION MATTERS BY SEAMUS ____ 26
SELECTIONS FROM THE NEW DEVIL'S DICTIONARY BY ANTI-HERO ____ 34
TROTWATCH BY MICHAEL ____ 36
MUSIC AND POLITICS BY JAMES ____ 38

A TYPICAL EDITORS' MEETING FOR MELBOURNE BLACK.

"How many articles this month?"

"Seven. Wait, nine. Wait, six. Not sure."

"So I was having dinner with Marx, Engels, and Lenin..."

"Have you seen this video on YouTube?"

"For fuck's sake, no. I'm trying to finish this article."

"Then why are you on Facebook?"

"Isn't it strange that they censor penetration but not gaping assholes?"

"What did you guys think of the *Mutiny* review?"

"They loved my article. They're very perceptive, and excellent comrades."

"They panned my article. They're sectarian."

"They didn't mention my article. They're irrelevant."

"Boo hoo hoo."

"Bitch, put the kettle on."

"Is it still the May issue if we get it out in June?"

"Well, we didn't get the April issue out 'til May..."

"He says he'll send it to us by tomorrow. Maybe. Or Friday."

"Roland's a sook."

"Any ideas for this editorial?"

Chaos is productive.
Please contribute:
melbourneblack@gmail.com ◆

Website:

melbourneblack.wordpress.com

Email:
melbourneblack@gmail.com

Editors:
Michael & Seamus

Sexy design guru:
Lumps

Cover:
Detail from Sydney Anti-Fascist Committee poster from the Melbourne Anarchist Club archives (see page 19). It's portrait of Eduardo Uriarte Romero, an ETA guerrilla sentenced to death by the Franco regime for the murder of a policeman. His sentence was commuted to 169 years gaol (!) and he was eventually freed in an amnesty in 1977.

Thanks:
We'd like to thank all our fantastic contributors, you rock. Lumps as always. Everyone who has given us stuff we haven't printed. Everyone who has given us feedback or critique. Everyone involved in the campaigns we cover. Considering the content we cover this month we have to give big thanks to Liz. Everyone who reads us, cheers!

PASSPORTS FOR THE MERAK REFUGEES

BY REBECCA & SEAMUS

This May Day there was a protest held on the steps of Trades Hall held by a coalition of activists from the Refugee Action Collective, the Melbourne Anti-Intervention Collective and the Aboriginal tent embassy, with support from other groups.

Around 200 people (including the usual contingent of flag-bearing SAlts*) attended the rally, at which a series of speakers and musicians attacked government policy on asylum seekers, particularly in relation to the recent suspension of processing of claims from asylum seekers from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The detention of the Merak refugees in Indonesia has further galvanized the movement against these policies. The speakers indicted the Australian government as a genocidal institution, including the policies of forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the

* SAlt = Socialist Alternative, a Leninist party based mainly at the élite Melbourne University. The party distinguishes itself from others with a confrontational polemical style, larger numbers and high turn-over.

support for the murderous acts of the Sri Lankan government. It was this accusation that constituted the unity of this coalition, and underlined the direct action of the day: the signing of Indigenous nation passports for all of the Merak refugees.

It is encouraging to see this kind of action occurring in Melbourne. It demonstrates how strong we can be when we pool our resources, work across our organizational and party allegiances, cease to be a "scene" and become a movement.

Robbie Thorpe, acting on behalf of the Aboriginal tent embassy, confirmed that, to his knowledge, this is the first time that the refugee movement and the movement for Indigenous rights have cooperated in this way. Joe Lorback explained to us how the coalition had to be built through social networks, drawing Indigenous activists, the Refugee Action Collective, and the Tamil community together. Other groups provided supporting services, such as Trades Hall and the Socialist Party, which fundraised $500 for the event in Steve Jolly's Yarra City council seat. As Saradha Nathan (Tamil Justice) put it, when we work together we have a stronger voice that can oppose government "scaremongering" and attempts to mislead a "naïve public." Many activists were also keenly aware of the artificiality of constructs such as borders and the state, with Gian Carlo (Refugee Action Collective) remarking that "borders should be let down as they are already down for those with privilege."

It is encouraging to see this kind of action occurring in Melbourne. It demonstrates how strong we can be when we pool our resources, work across our organizational and party allegiances, cease to be a "scene" and become a movement. One must wonder, however, what prospects there are for future cooperation of this sort. Most of the event organizers we interviewed had only vague ideas of future cooperation. Those ideas must be built into practical action. We must develop both a model and a language for collective struggle. The event displayed the outlines of such a language. It was recognised that the government that perpetrates genocidal policies against Australia's Indigenous people is the same government that perpetrates and backs war overseas. But with so many of the speakers falling neatly into the category of an "Indigenous activist" or a "refugee activist," or trying to straddle these categories, it seems there is much work to be done. Critically, there needs to be additional work to involve trade unions in such alliances. While several speakers spoke in favour of trade union action, and appreciatively of trade union support for the rally, there was no serious union presence at the event (apart from Jacob Grech, caretaker of Trades Hall, and some unionists who attended as members of other organizations). Clearly there are massive tasks in the movement's future particularly, as Pamela Curr (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre) points out, as "election fever" spreads and "the dogs are let loose in Canberra." However, this May Day action is a sign that, working together, our movement has the strength it needs. ◆

MAY DAY HOUSING ACTION.

BY C.I.O.

At 1.30pm on May 1st, activists dropped a banner reading 'Rising Rents = Rising Homeless' from the seventh floor of an overpriced apartment block across from Flinders Street train station.

Editor's note:
Reprinted from *Melbourne Indymedia.* You can see the original here:

tinyurl.com/indymediacio

This has been reprinted as a means to publicise a new housing action group in Melbourne, currently operating under the name The City is Ours (C.I.O). We are currently working towards publishing an updated version of *The Squatters Handbook,* revitalising the 3CR S.U.W.A. show's squatting information and assistance telephone line, and undertaking actions.

Email:
contact@melbournecio.org

The action was taken in solidarity with similar events being held across the U.S.A. by the Take Back The Land group (takebacktheland.org) and highlighted the rental rip-offs taking place in Melbourne, including landlords charging AUD$480 a week for tiny spaces in the building from which the banner was hung. Passersby, including a huge contingent of the undead taking part in a zombie walk, gave the banner the thumbs up. Flyers highlighting the human cost of the city's rental crisis (text below) were also handed out. Those involved in the action plan to come together in the coming months to launch a new version of the Melbourne Squatters Handbook and organise further actions. For more information contact: **renegadeactivist@gmail.com**
[*Below is the pamphlet text from the action* —***Eds***]

Rip Off

What percentage of your wages is spent on rent? The housing crisis is affecting everyone. We all know someone with a horror story about housing prices.

Melbourne's population has grown by almost 150,000 in the past two years and one quarter of Melbourne's population pay rent. This means that landlords and real estate agents have been able to jack up the prices of rental accommodation.

A report just released by the National Housing Supply Council states that the housing shortage has reached 200,000 homes, while at the same time one in ten properties in Australia are being left vacant!

The percentage of our income we spend on housing has sky-rocketed. More than 160,000 households are paying more than half their income on housing repayments and 170,000 paying more than half their income on rent!

There are over 15,000 homeless people in Melbourne. For many people, homelessness is not temporary.

Some rooming house operators are taking advantage of the situation by setting up short term rooms for very high rents in appalling conditions. In January 2008 three international students died in a rooming house fire in Footscray. The students were "hot-bedding", that is, they shared rooms and took shifts to sleep because they could not afford their own bedrooms. In 2009, there were about 150 Indian students hot-bedding in the City of Moreland alone. In 2007, two people died in a Brunswick rooming house fire.

We are taking this action because we don't want to see our rent money going to dodgy landlords who take no responsibility for our homes. Because we don't want public housing privatised through Public Private Partnerships, and because everyone has a right to live somewhere with dignity. Because rising rents mean rising homelessness and the rental rip off must stop. ◆

Banner drop on May 1st, 2010.

A HISTORY OF SQUATTING CAMPAIGNS IN MELBOURNE.

BY IAIN MCINTYRE

This is an edited version of a talk given by Iain at Camp Eureka on Monday, 26th April 2010.

1946 Squatting Campaign

Inspired by a major campaign in the U.K., where hundreds if not thousands of properties were taken over, the Communist Party of Australia (C.P.A.) initiated a series of squatting actions to address the post war housing shortage.

The activists involved were able to tap into a number of key resources, not least the general ferment around gender and class based issues that were happening in the wake of the war. In doing so they were able to appeal to people's fears of another depression and the general demand that they be rewarded for wartime sacrifices.

Although Cold War hysteria around Communism was about to begin, the idea that society should provide for the basic needs of all was a prevalent one at the time. Much of this was channelled into state based solutions and the creation of the welfare state, but nevertheless it allowed the squatting campaign to draw

Editor's Note
The full version is available on the Melbourne Black website.

on ideas that many people at some level agreed with. Unlike today strong communities also existed and people knew their neighbours. Although this didn't automatically translate into support for such campaigns it gave them a base from which to draw on.

C.P.A. activists may have been using squatting to primarily advocate for more public housing rather than complete community control, but the idea of seizing unused properties on the basis of need was still a radical one. In this they were aided by Wartime Moratorium Regulations in which people were able to identify empties whose owners could then be compelled to rent them out. At the beginning of the campaign the prosecution of the regulations was weak and inconsistent, but they provided a policy that activists could point to and build on. In doing so they were able to argue that by squatting they were enforcing the spirit, if not the letter, of the law.

Lastly the various squatting actions had a core of organised activists who were willing to occupy properties and guard them for as long as it took. These troublemakers also had an existing support network in the C.P.A. which boosted the neighbourhood committees that were set up.

The campaign probably started in January, but kicked off publicly in May when Returned Service League (R.S.L.) and C.P.A. members (possibly one and the same) seized the "Marranah" mansion in Kings Cross turning it over to a number of families. After a concerted campaign the local council was forced to recognise the occupiers as tenants and begin much needed repairs. In the same month four families with the assistance of the C.P.A., R.S.L., the Legion of Ex Servicemen and the Commonwealth Association squatted staff cottages adjoining a factory at St Mary's after the factory's manager rejected applications for legal occupation.

The Union sometimes physically helped people set up squats and also picketed councils and real estate agents over evictions.

Further squats continued to be set up in Sydney and in June the campaign spread to Melbourne where the Box Hill C.P.A. branch transferred a family from a cowshed to a house that had been deserted for three years. In the same month ex-servicemen and their supporters were arrested and heavily fined for wilful trespass after they refused to leave a property in St Kilda. In Hobart, two families broke in

Pro-squatting sticker

and took possession of rooms in an empty private hospital. Within a month 53 homeless people had moved in including 27 children.

July saw similar actions in Melbourne and Sydney with several public meetings also held. The biggest action saw six families occupy vacant huts in the Royal Marine compound at Moore Park. The families and C.P.A. members scaled a fence enclosing the Cleveland Street compound before police moved in and laid siege for a number of days. Unable to leave for fear of arrest and eviction the families were provided with food and blankets by locals.

A campaign against the squatters was begun in the media with attempts made to brand them "communist dupes", but this failed to break either local support or the squatters' resolve. By the month's end victory was achieved when the squatters were finally given the opportunity to buy the huts with finance supplied by the federal government.

Similar actions continued and eventually also spread to Newcastle. By August the C.P.A. claimed to have housed over 130 homeless people in Sydney alone.

Information on how the campaign wrapped up is limited. However it would appear that the squatters embarrassed various authorities into applying the wartime provisions more closely and that this is where the activists' energy increasingly went. However squatting continued on into 1947 with families squatting a disused tennis pavilion in Williamstown where they converted the change rooms into living spaces.

Squatters Union of Victoria (S.U.V.)

THE SQUATTERS UNION RAN from the early 1980s until the end of the decade. Judging from the Union's magazine, and the people I've met who were involved, it was primarily an anarchist group. Unlike the 1940s campaign the Union's activities were primarily run by squatters themselves. At times there was only a small core activists involved, many of whom were also unemployed.

Although payments were very low, the conditions on the dole were far more lenient than they are today and this allowed some activists to go at things full time. The Union was also able to draw on a larger pool of squatters as well as people involved in the punk scene and unemployed activism. Many of the core Squatters Union folks were involved in all three.

The Union also had the advantage of there being many more empties available than today, particularly in the inner city and Ministry of Housing and Military Housing areas like Braybrook and Laverton. Early on the s.u.v. often worked with housing groups and ran joint campaigns publicising the eviction of squatters from disused public housing and council properties. In doing so the Union generated a lot of media interest and established itself as a contact point for people needing solidarity or advice. The Ministry of Housing's response was to trash empties and put any squatters they evicted to the bottom of the waiting list. Eventually under Jeff Kennett's reign a portion of housing stock and many government buildings were flogged off.

The Union sometimes physically helped people set up squats and also picketed councils and real estate agents over evictions. It also joined in broader campaigns around gentrification and housing in St Kilda and North Melbourne. It organised its own anti-eviction campaigns in Northcote, Fitzroy and other areas and occasionally took part in physically resisting evictions.

In Hobart, two families broke in and took possession of rooms in an empty private hospital. Within a month 53 homeless people had moved in including 27 children.

The s.u.v. also served as a media contact to comment on housing and squatting issues and claimed to have done 116 interviews in 1987, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, alone. Members of the Union presented a radio show, which eventually merged with the Unemployed Workers one to become s.u.w.a.. They also published 18 issues of *Squat It!* magazine.

The Union's activities crossed over with mass squats and social spaces such as a warehouse in Wellington St, Collingwood, a squatted café on a pier in Port Melbourne, a squatted Orphanage in South Melbourne and the Community Fire Station in Fitzroy. The latter served as

the Union's headquarters in the late 1980s as well as the home of the Unemployed Workers Union, Koori Press and other groups.

Probably the most useful thing we did was to put out about 1,000 copies of the *1993 Squatters Handbook*.

The S.U.V. also ran an advice service. According to some stats published in *Squat It!* they, along with the Western Region Housing Council, received 485 enquiries from people interested in squatting in 1987 and had 80 reports of empties which allowed them to build a list of 100s of properties. In the same year the Union claimed to have distributed 10,000 leaflets and pasted up 2,000 posters. All in all the various people who moved through the organisation over the best part of a decade were a busy bunch. If you're interested in finding out more about the organisation and its activities you can find copies of *Squat It!* in the Loophole library and the State Library of Victoria.

1990s Activism

My personal experiences with squatting activism in Melbourne during the 1990s weren't quite as exciting as the campaigns of the 1940s or 1980s. I'll talk about them mainly to illustrate what people have done in the quiet times and also to discuss the usefulness of large, sustained, public squats—something we didn't have.

I moved to Melbourne in 1992 and got involved in the local scene after meeting local squatters at a public talk. The group I became involved with was originally called the Squatters Information Service (S.I.S.) and later became the Squatters Information Network (S.I.N.) because the acronym was cooler. We were auspiced by a housing lobby group called Shelter Victoria (S.V.) who had a relationship with squatters going back to the S.U.V. days. They provided us with a phone and a listing in the White Pages as well as the use of their office on Friday afternoons.

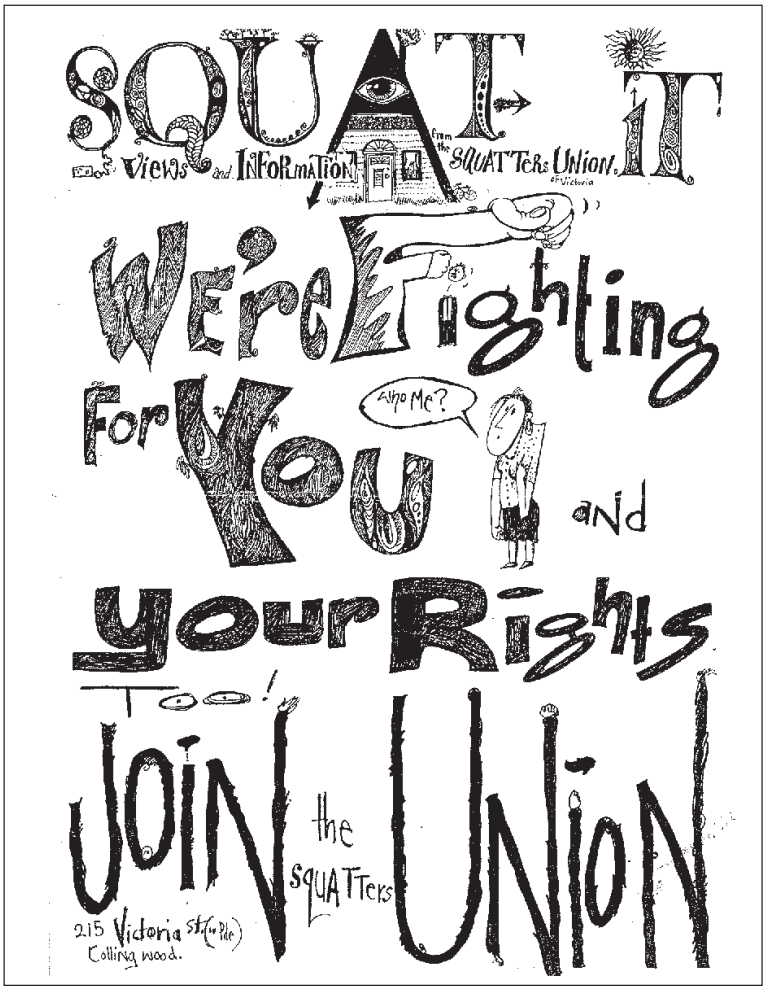
There was a group of maybe 5–10 people who would do a once a month shift on the phone or hang out and use the photocopier. Around that there was a larger group of people who would call in with the addresses of empty houses which we kept in a file and would then pass onto people who called in. People were meant to call back if the place was being lived in or was a no go, but few ever did. We promoted the group via announcements on Radio 3CR

and the S.U.W.A. show as well as through stickers and posters. A lot of callers simply looked us up in the phone book under "squatter" because they'd heard of the Squatters Union via its earlier campaigns.

Most of our callers were either mothers with kids who were about to be evicted and needed somewhere pronto or people who had been eyeing off an empty in their area for some time. Most weeks two to five people would call up and we'd do what we could to help them, which to be honest often wasn't much. The laws provided no protection unless the police or someone other than the owner was trying to evict them and we weren't in a position to provide physical solidarity.

Probably the most useful thing we did was to put out about 1,000 copies of the 1993 *Squatters Handbook*. This was circulated through Housing groups and services as well as via various sub-cultural haunts. On the back of that some of us did talks with various groups. I remember running a workshop in Geelong talking with some homeless kids about their experiences with squatting and strategies for dealing with the police and landlords.

Nearly all of us were squatting. There were still a lot of empties around in the inner city then, probably an average of one every couple of streets.

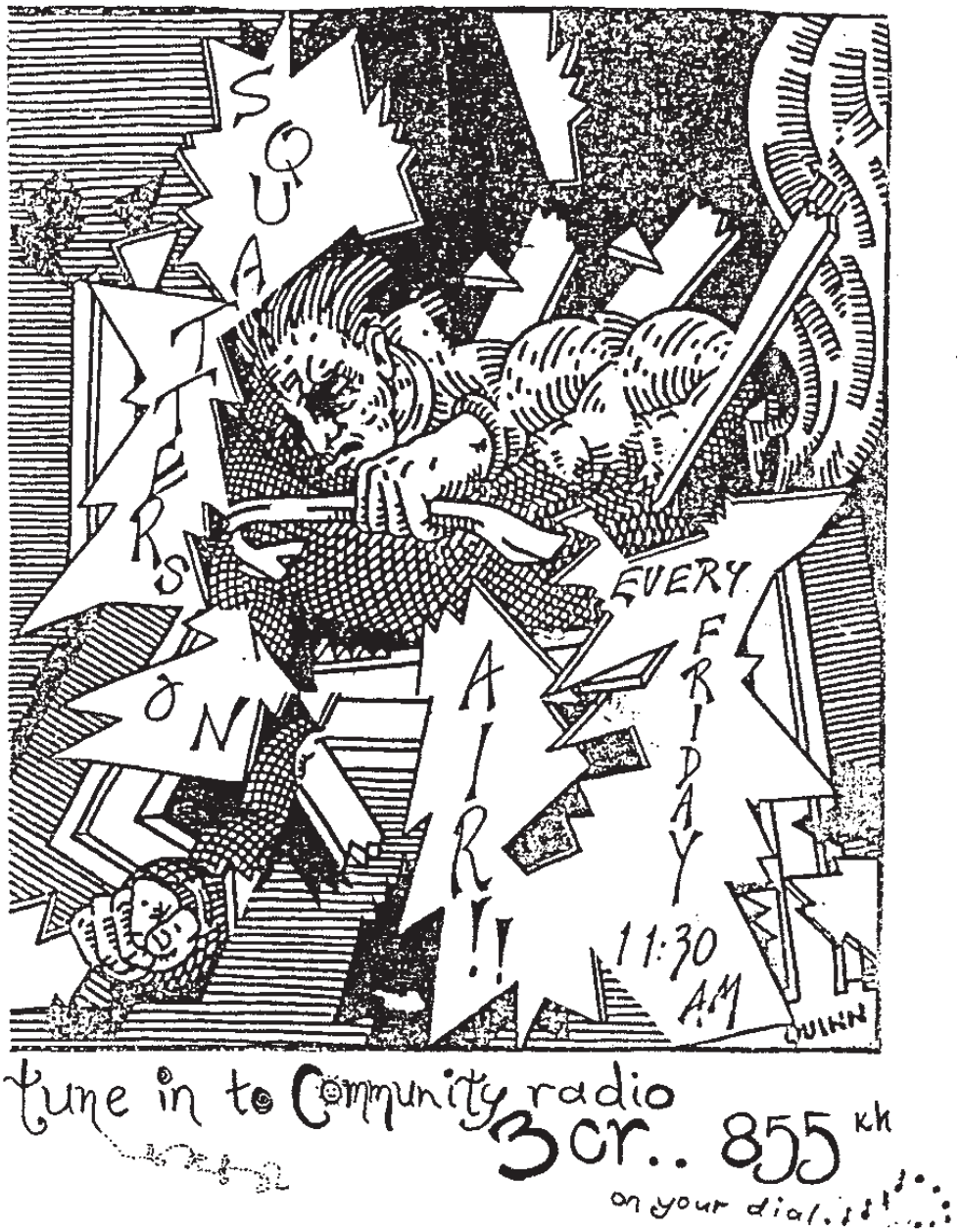


Squatter's Union pamphlet.

Although I had better luck in later years I tended to pick the ones which didn't last long, but generally if you kept at it you could find one that did.

People were fairly upfront when I got involved that S.I.N. was to be an advice line only although some in the collective did help people break into properties. The only time we planned on doing an action while I was in the group it ended in a near fatal split.

We'd been asked to do something during Housing Week by S.V. and we decided to squat a building in the city to highlight the number of unused properties in Melbourne. From memory



Poster advertising the S.U.W.A. show on 3CR.

(and it may be faulty) half of the small band who would be potentially involved decided they would only take part if we engaged in all out resistance. I can't recall the exact reasoning, but I guess it would be a show of militancy. The rest of us had mixed feelings. Objections to a stand up fight included that it would be suicidal and/or stupid for a small group of people to tangle with the police over what was essentially a publicity stunt, that dealing with courts, etc would be a waste of our limited personal and group resources, and that we should wait and see how things panned out on the day. In the end everyone got huffy and nothing came of it.

Following our direct action debacle things with S.I.N. slowly fizzled out. With the election of Kennett many of us got sidetracked into things like the Northlands and Richmond secondary school occupations. Some of us however continued to be involved with the S.U.W.A. show, which people still occasionally call for advice to this day. In 2001, S.U.W.A. folks put together a mini "No Frills" version of the S.I.N. handbook and managed to get 1,000–2,000 copies out as well as eventually set up a website.

Both S.I.N. and I guess S.U.W.A.'s main contribution was in providing practical advice and promoting the idea of squatting to smallish numbers of people. Given the tiny crew who were involved in squatting activism and the diminishing pool of supporters around us that was probably the best we could do.

In the years since I've noticed that every time a large and reasonably public space has been squatted the overall interest and number of people squatting has also increased. In the mid 1990s a space was squatted on Wellington St which was dubbed the Brown Warehouse. The same space had been previously squatted as a café back in the 1980s. This time around it housed various people, many of them travelling back and forth from forest protests, and also held gigs and other events. There was also another place down the road called Fabryka which had a café night. Both spaces were evicted after about 3-6 months, but the Brown Warehouse caught a lucky break when the owners took the squatters to court instead of just sending the police around when no one was home. That allowed the occupants time to barricade which stalled the owners for a short while and later saw the police call off a planned eviction. It also got squatting and the campaign to save the space a lot of publicity. I guess it's fairly obvious, but as in the 1940s and 1980s, the experience of the Brown Warehouse demonstrates that if you can show that a radical solution works then people will give it a go. ◆

BEST DRESS FOR KULON PROGO.

BY MEAL

The Kulon Progo farmers in the Yogyakarta region, of Indonesia, have been hit by an enormous challenge to their decades of self-reliance and autonomous practice.

The land is being threatened by the prospect of being turned into an iron mine. Not only will this take away the livelihood of the farmers, but this project will have a massive environmental impact upon the land.

For decades, the Kulon Progo farmers have overcome obstacles that would otherwise have put a halt to their practice of living, such as daily battering by the wind and the occasional storm, and a ban on farming by the government. But their insistence on being autonomous and independent has helped their survival. Through the custom of meeting, discussing and sharing, they gradually found new strategies to grow and survive together.

That is, until the news came that, under the belly of the sand on which they thrive, there is fresh water and iron. The fresh water has revitalized the lives of the inhabitants of the region. But the iron has brought the attention of investors from mining companies. In late 2005, PT Jogja Magasa Mining (Indonesia) in collaboration with Indo Mines Limited (Australia), made their way to

the region and, with the help of the Indonesian government, imposed upon the farmers the project to mine out the region's iron ore.

Since 2005, through a strong solidarity the Kulon Progo farmers have consistently opposed any kind of intervention into their livelihood as farmers. They have rejected offers to be waged, to work for people they have never known, and to destroy the land they have cultivated for decades.

So in January, we set out to show some support by protesting in front of the Indonesian Consulate in Melbourne. Our activity was small, but we did it. It took us less than a week to organize, show up, film and distribute. We believe we did what's right and that is to be in solidarity with the farmers of Kulon Progo.

Some time passed by, until a comrade from Indonesia in a passing conversation mentioned that the news of the protest reached Kulon Progo and it brought the attention to the local news. The farmers were happy to find out about our activity. He said there has been a sort of restraint by the authorities in arbitrarily arresting local activists.

We have to say we're happy with the outcome. And obviously this gives us the motivation of keeping the pressure and makes this situation international.

And so we're currently trying to create a broader solidarity network here in Australia for the next protest. And we're humbly hoping to get as many groups and people as possible to protest, because we can't let the pressure down.

So wear your fanciest dress and darkest sunnies, and join us! Come down to the Indonesian Consulate on Saturday, 26th of June 2010 at 2PM. In the meantime, write to the Indonesian Consulate General or the Embassy and voice your disapproval of the project and the injustice. One letter sent is one more voice of support to the farmers.

You can write to:
Indonesia Consulate
Consular Section
72 Queens Road,
Melbourne, Victoria 3004 ◆

WORKERS SOLIDARITY NETWORK.

BY CONAL

W.S.N. is a project which emerged out of discussions last year in a range of forums, including radical conferences in Melbourne and Sydney. Comrades in other capital cities were also involved and kept in contact via an email list. The discussions centred around how rank and file unionists in various industries could support each other in struggle.

This is a report from the Workers Solidarity Netowrk (W.S.N.) meeting held at Melbourne Trades Hall on the 18th May, as well as some comments made on the W.S.N. project in general, from a Left libertarian and anarchist perspective. The article seeks to convince people of this general point of view to be involved, and make it to the next meeting: 6pm Tuesday 15th of June at Trades Hall.

W.S.N. is already operating in Sydney and Canberra, and possibly in Wollongong. The Canberra group is only small but they are already involved in supporting bus drivers in a dispute up there.

In Melbourne, we should remember that during the years of the Howard government a similar project was born called Union Solidarity. Union Solidarity had a large

degree of success, especially in challenging new, anti-union draconian laws during the Boeing dispute of 2008 for instance (see the I.R. news section of unionsolidarity.org for details of their activities during this period). However, roughly a year after the election of the federal Labor government, Union Solidarity was disbanded. The website cites a lack of resources and that, "the demands on… one small and centralised list of union activists [had] proved unsustainable."

In setting up this general structure, that will no doubt excite people of a generally Left libertarian perspective, W.S.N nevertheless allows a wide range of people to be involved.

One of the best aspects of the new W.S.N. idea, is the focus on a change in organising structure. In Melbourne, it was agreed that a committee of five would be elected at the following meeting, who will be recallable by the membership at the monthly meetings. This committee will perform an essential task in any organisation like this, to be on call and to make certain decisions as they are immediately necessary. From a libertarian perspective, this is basically the role of a recallable committee in an anarcho-syndicalist union charged with such a responsibility. However, it should be noted that unions with a developed libertarian critique such as this employ even stricter controls over delegates (rotating them at defined intervals for instance). A committee of five will be hopefully be large enough to train up younger people, with the experience of older unionists behind them. It will also share the burden of a voluntary organisation more widely.

In setting up this general structure, that will no doubt excite people of a generally Left libertarian perspective, W.S.N. nevertheless allows a wide range of people to be involved. Obviously the point is to build a large network of rank and file unionists who can support each other. This includes those parties we call authoritarian socialists. One comment at the last meeting was that W.S.N. is a "limited project," allowing participants to pursue our own strategies, elsewhere. It does not negate our attempts to build anarchist groups, anarcho-syndicalist unions, and to argue for radically democratic, libertarian organising structures within the Left. But by the same token, if members of political parties

The call out (available at tinyurl.com/2495ax6) details that the W.S.N. would:

- Give support to and work in conjunction with workers fighting for better wages and conditions against attacks by bosses and governments.
- Have a large list of members who would receive communication via sms text message and emails when their support is required at workplace actions.
- A committee of five people would be appointed to make decisions about which industrial actions the network would partake in. This would allow for fast decisions in situations where workers need to mobilise support quickly.
- All members of this committee would be directly recallable and accountable to a monthly meeting of all network members.
- Assist workers that are organising important actions that require broad support, whether those workers be organised inside or outside of official union structures.
- Be funded by and accountable to members.

want to pursue their strategy of having their people elected into union hierarchies and similar policies, let them. So long as the W.S.N. caucus itself remains a place where workers can gain practical support for direct action they are taking, regardless of whatever other strategies they are involved in, and regardless of whether they are inside or outside of Labor Party controlled unions, W.S.N. will fill a large void in the present union movement.

And yet, for anarchists, the general emphasis of the W.S.N. idea does have an inherent politics. It would be wrong to try to define the exact politics of W.S.N. at the present time, and certainly wrong to call it anarchist. But any association does inevitably have politics. This appears currently limited to a general agreement and emphasis to provide practical support to workers in struggle, while not being beholden to Labor Party controlled union hierarchies. Anarchists can complain about those union hierarchies (which start with your union dues and end with Kevin Rudd refusing to demolish the A.B.C.C.) until we're blue in the face. But at the end of the day, anarchists need to be more involved in every day struggles of the union movement. If this does not mean supporting Left tickets in union elections, we need to define how it is that we are involved. W.S.N. offers a good forum for anyone wanting to become active in their workplace, particularly if their official workplace union is a dud. But it should be of particular interest to anarchists, because its structure and general focus on direct action is a step in the right direction. ◆

HELP FREE SPAIN
¡ todos en pie, como una muralla, para defender las vidas de Izko, Uriarte, Onaindia, Gorostidi, Larena y Dorronsoro !
¡ GORA EUZKADI ASKATUTA !
- clamaron los 16 ante el tribunal fascista -
IZKO, URIARTE, ONAINDIA, GOROSTIDI, LARENA, DORRONSORO
Court sentences 6
Basques to death
HELP FREE SPAIN!
SYDNEY SPANISH ANTI FASCIST COMMITTEE

A poster distributed by the Sydney Anti-Fascist Committee, early 1970s.

The Melbourne Anarchist Club is currently archiving our poster and pamphlet collection. We are also interested in any anarchist books, zines, badges and stickers, especially if they were produced locally. If you have anything you'd like to donate, please email us: melbourneanarchistclub@gmail.com

ANARCHY IS A FAG: I.D.A.H.O. AND OTHER STUFF.

BY BENNY RUDEBOY

May 17th, as some may already know is International Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia (I.D.A.H.O.). This date is specifically chosen because it was on May 17th, 1990 that the United Nations decided to take same-sex attraction off the (I.C.D.) list of disorders and such.

There was an action in the form of a flashmob called in Melbourne at Federation Square for around 5:30pm but after sitting in the cold and freezing my bollocks off I realised that it was going to happen closer to 6pm. I had made some signs for the action, some of which read: 'Queers Bash BAck!', 'Queer Youth Suicide; Silence = Death' and 'The Great Double Standard… Knife Crime: Front page! Gay Bashing: Ignored!' The plan of the action was for everybody to drop dead for 3 minutes in memory of those killed as a direct result of Queerphobic violence.

Out of the 200+ that said they were coming on the Facebook page (tinyurl.com/29sgyby) , about half showed up, surprise surprise. But it was still a decent crowd for what it was worth. The signs that I saw, that I hadn't written myself, were very much done by individuals who came to the action and there was no Party or Union specific signs. It had a very intimate and D.I.Y. feel to it especially when there was nobody trying to flog us copies of magazines. There was no issue with or hostility against us being there or the action taking place. The only thing that came up in the way of questioning the action was the two security staff who work at Federation Square. We let them know that no action was happening in the boundaries of Federation Square and pointed them to where it would happen, which was the grey concrete footpath section in front of Federation Square outside the bar, Taxi.

After the action had finished and most of us were dispersing into the cold Melbourne night I had a chat to the organiser of the action, Gemma Demarco. Gemma has mentioned that the same action was done in Amsterdam in 2009 and they actually stopped traffic, which I thought was impressive. They also mentioned that they intend to do this again but with more publicity to promote the action so as to guarantee a higher turn out.

This is my proposal: personally, I am a fan of flash mobs, be they zombie shuffles, pillow fights or the I.D.A.H.O. flash mob. I figure if there is an 'Equal Love' rally monthly then there should be monthly anti-Queerphobic violence actions too as I see it as being a more pressing and direct issue confronting the Queer community not just locally but globally. Stopping traffic once a month is the least we can do.

Any comments can be sent to bash_back_86@riseup.net ◆

NOTES FROM CAMP EUREKA.

BY SEAMUS

"It's terrorist training camp, I think."
"Are we being recruited?"
"Ooh, look. A sing-along."

I attended Camp Eureka for three reasons. First, I wanted to get wasted in the woods, in the proximity of a campfire. Second, I viewed the weekend as a pedagogical direct action. I am in favour of such interventions, so I was curious what model they were using. Several organisations in Melbourne have run regular educational meetings (for many parties, every meeting is in some way designed as an educational). Finally, I wanted to get an insight into the politics of the mysterious Renegade Activist Action Force (r.a.a.f... honestly).

Camp Eureka was built in the 1940s by Communist Party scouts. It shows, particularly in the dining room. We ate three (excellent) vegetarian meals a day on two long tables, seated side by side and face to face. Despite being well fed, and having no exercise apart from strolling up and down a muddy hillside, we were always hungry at mealtime. The architecture suggested community. You had no choice but to sit shoulder-to-shoulder with, hopefully, comrades. And yes, there was a sing-along. Some people even thought to bring beer. I couldn't help thinking that the setting, and the schedule (wake up, eat, talk politics, tea and a fag, talk politics, more fags, eat, talk politics, eat, talk politics, put the kettle on, etc), were as

valuable pedagogical tools as the content of the Camp Eureka program. Even if they communicated nothing else, R.A.A.F. would have done me a personal service by enabling me to meet several activists whom I look forward to working with in the future.

I have to admit, when I first saw the weekend programme, it looked a little schizophrenic.

Several of us who had be wondering what R.A.A.F.'s politics were didn't find this terribly re-assuring. However, it proved to be an extremely valuable range of topics. Having drifted around the Melbourne left for several months, I consider myself reasonably informed. But the speakers were excellently informed: they provided me with the history and tactics of past struggles, as well as the most recent developments in their areas of expertise. So, in terms of general content, the weekend was extremely educational. What was more interesting, however, and provided a clue into who R.A.A.F. are and what they stand for, was the theme running through all of the weekend's sessions. The organisers stressed how all of these issues were interconnected, and the potential for building solidarity between movements. This was not simple dogmatic reductionism (all evils are caused by capitalism, come the revolution we will abolish all social ills, etc). Concrete examples of the cooperation between unions and indigenous people, the multiple social and environmental consequences of the nuclear industry, and discussions of how unions must organise within both the workplace and the wider community all showed how unity both flows from our social reality and enables us to change it. A real movement for change, they claimed, must transcend organisational loyalties and embrace activists regardless of their professed ideology or preferred tactics.

Several of us who had be wondering what R.A.A.F.'s politics were didn't find this terribly re-assuring. However, it proved to be an extremely valuable range of topics.

While I welcome R.A.A.F.'s call for unity among (and beyond) the Left, the camp program failed to provide a finished model for this unity. I felt, at the end of the weekend, that I had been presented with a whole range of past and present campaigns. All of them seemed to have worthwhile objectives. All of them provided me with good strategic and tactical examples

to consider. But when I considered how I could support these campaigns, I was left with no other option than to go to a dozen meetings a month for half a dozen different organisations and attempt to build unity within these groups, recruiting more diverse sectors of society to participate in collective action.

But when I considered how I could support these campaigns, I was left with no other option than to go to a dozen meetings a month for half a dozen different organisations and attempt to build unity within these groups, recruiting more diverse sectors of society to participate in collective action.

My experiences with many Melbourne campaigns are of the kind of bureaucracy (40 minutes discussing leaflet layouts and then to the pub) that stifle the very creativity and diversity that R.A.A.F. promotes. What we seem to need, then, is a model of unity between organisations, building unity across demographics. The affinity group serves as one possible organisational model on which to base such a unity. So do unions, tenants' organisations, and other social movements. I agree with R.A.A.F.: there is no perfect organisation, ideology, or strategy. But the solution is not to build a "unity" organisation, with a pluralist ideology and a multifaceted strategy. It is to acknowledge that this diversity already exists. What we need now is to start talking to each other and identifying our common enemies. Not at the abstract level of "capital," but its institutional and objectified forms: governments, police forces, corporations and their hirelings, that we can cooperate in actively combatting. It is my hope that *Melbourne Black* can serve as a tool for this kind of communication.

In subsequent discussions with R.A.A.F., we have broadly agreed that there remain many practical issues for building a unified culture of opposition. They have, graciously, admitted the shortcomings of Camp Eureka. Nevertheless, I laud their efforts in what I consider to have been a successful pedagogical direct action. I would encourage more groups to invite me on camping excursions and to blow my mind. Therefore I will finish in the spirit of learning, with a few logistical issues that arose during the weekend that others might be advised to avoid in the future. First, I would increase the number of panel discussions. Due to time constraints, and lost speakers, two of the talks (on unions and

feminism) ended up as panels. These provided me with a better sense of the complexities of the issues, allowed me to counterpose perspectives, and in general provoked more fruitful reflection than a series of lone speakers (who were, nevertheless, excellent). (p.s. To certain parties that will remain nameless: it doesn't count as a panel if everyone, or everyone but one celebrity, is from the same organisation. Then again, I don't think you read Melbourne Black.) Second, the action-planning sessions were all delayed until Monday, by which time most people had run out of clean socks and gone home (including yours truly). A better-structured timetable could have prevented this. Finally, sing-alongs should include more songs that I know. Not a note of Woodie Guthrie, for shame. But in spite of these flaws, and the discussions we still need to have, I laud R.A.A.F. for their efforts, and thanks for all the grub. ◆

EDUCATION MATTERS: RADICAL EDUCATION NETWORKS.

BY SEAMUS

In my last article I promised an outline of a guerilla war in education. Since then, I have been wondering what the hell that could possibly mean.

My work towards this month's article has, therefore, been primarily a review of possible military approaches to social change. I will, therefore, begin with a discussion of this discourse in the left, including but not limited to concepts of guerilla war. I will follow this with my own proposals for a network warfare approach to education, as well as the goals to which such a strategy should orient itself.

Theoretical overview

The use of military metaphors in Marxist discourse on social change stems from Lenin. "All of the terminological innovations which Leninism and the Comintern introduce to Marxism belong to military vocabulary (tactical alliance, strategic line, so many steps forward and so many back); none refers to the very structuring of the social

relations, which Gramsci would later address with his concepts of historical bloc, integral State, and so forth" (Laclau and Mouffe: 57). We will shortly return to Gramsci (patience, my pretties), but it worth exploring the Leninist conception of what we might, for this purpose, call the class war. The Bolsheviks' great accomplishment in Russia was not so much social revolution, but a tactical coup. It was the First World War which put the final nail in the tsarist coffin, culminating with the revolt of the Imperial army. It was Lenin's genius to see a power vacuum (note how we can only describe it with spatial metaphors) which he could occupy with his political-military apparatus, which became the Soviet regime. Certainly, Marx's prior work on the French Revolution had given a militaristic slant to leftist discussions on revolution (we expected barricades, at the very least, and executing monarchs is always fun). But it was Lenin that worked out the theory of the *conquest of state power* by the proletariat. It was Lenin's work to develop the theory of "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a statist-militarist dictatorship. When we talk about class war, even as anarchists, we should acknowledge the Leninist heritage in our ideas. This is not about becoming Leninists: it is about critical self-awareness that allows us to recreate our theoretical and tactical principles in recognition that 2010 is not 1917 (even if you *are* up for another 1917, please realise it just isn't going to happen, as surely as 1917 was not 1789).

Remaining, broadly, within the Leninist tradition (i.e. theoretical approaches characterised by the objective of conquering state power), we reach Mao. Much has been made of the differences between the Russian and Chinese revolutions, but I wish to indicate two similarities. First, both conceived of the Communist Party as the bearer of the historical truth of the revolution (vanguardism), a position that anarchists and autonomists must utterly reject. Second, both included stages where the party organises itself outside of state power in preparation for its assault, something which, I hope, we can steal an turn to a libertarian-socialist aim. Mao's guerilla war, broadly adopted by Che Guevara (with a few additions), proceeds in three stages:

1. The party forms as a guerilla force, operating underground. It is, at this stage, a would-be government in exile. Its military operations at this stage are restricted to anti-government banditry: stealing supplies, small-scale redistribution, and

liquidating small pockets of government military power (isolated military bases, police stations and the like).

2. The party begins to build regular military units and governmental structures in "liberated zones." Military, there is a combination of guerilla and regular operations (i.e. pitched battles with larger concentrations of government forces).
3. The party conquers state power. In this last stage, guerillas are either incorporated into regular units, or else act as auxiliaries. For the most part, military operations are "regularised." That is, they have the goal of conquering territory, and sovereignty, by means of battle.

There are several useful ideas that we can take from the Maoist guerilla. The first is that, while the forces of state and capital retain their strength, the revolution forms in exile. Resources are liberated from the oppressors by subterfuge and small-scale raids. The revolution establishes its contacts wherever possible, and on the basis of local conditions seizes the low-hanging fruit. This weakens and discredits the powers that be, while strengthening the revolution and training the revolutionaries. Guerilla bands also operate in a highly decentralised manner: local cadres are in the best position to understand local conditions, and their success is based on the freedom to take their own initiative. For Mao, this is a necessary concession that revolutionaries must make while they are still unable to construct a regular military, and its counterpart in a regular state apparatus. For anarchists, this is nothing less than the expression of revolutionary freedom.

I believe that, from a libertarian perspective, the revolutionary theories of Lenin and Mao can be enriched by a discussion of Gramci's concept of hegemony. For this purpose, I quote at length from the prison notebooks:

> "One could say that ideologies for the governed are mere illusions, a deception to which they are subject, while for the governing they constitute a willed and a knowing deception. For the philosophy of praxis [Marxism], ideologies are anything but arbitrary; they are real historical facts which must be combated and their nature as instruments of domination revealed, not for reasons of morality etc., but for reasons of political struggle: in order to make the governed intellectually independent of the governing, in order to destroy one hegemony and create

> another, as a necessary moment in the revolutionizing of praxis. …For the philosophy of praxis the superstructures are an objective and operative reality (or they become so, when they are not pure products of the individual mind). It explicitly asserts that men become conscious of their social position, and therefore of their tasks, on the terrain of ideologies, which is no small affirmation of reality. The philosophy of praxis itself is a superstructure, it is the terrain on which determinate social groups become conscious of their own social being, their own strength, their own tasks, their own becoming. ”
>
> **(Gramsci 2000: 196).**

Again, it is easy to see how Gramsci's idea of the struggle for socialist hegemony adopt militaristic metaphors: we must *combat* capitalist ideology, *struggle* against capitalists, *destroy* their hegemony, by recognising our *position* on *the terrain of ideologies*. What is vital for my current purposes is how education takes on a "military" role in Gramsci's thought. If the basis of hegemony is consent, then education is a vital task for those seeking to either suppress or support a critical consciousness. Althusser adds that education is the terrain, and objective, of certain parts of the class struggle. The statist socialists sought to create a new, proletarian hegemony in the place of bourgeois capitalist hegemony. But the experience of the U.S.S.R. tells us how this will go: the party, as the bearer of correct theory, comes to stand in for the "masses" that have not sufficiently developed to merit self-government (See Laclau and Mouffe,). The mass, the excess of people who were not Bolshevik, included a few class traitors (anarchists) at first, a few more after each split (icepicks for everybody!), and for a few years anyone but Stalin. By seeking to keep enemies of the proletariat from power, the regime kept the proletariat from power.

The Radical Education Network

Althusser claims that the school is both the site and objective of the class struggle. Perhaps it would be better to say that *education* is the goal of class struggle, lest we "confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new" (Illich). Our task is not to merely take over the running of the educational bureaucracy, but to take over the tasks of education and

child-rearing from capital and statist bureaucracy. The basic tools for a network capable of these tasks are already in existence. In small pockets, education and child-care are in fact socialised as community responsibilities. It happens within parties and political organisations; within extended families and neighbourhoods; in scenes, unions, bowling alleys, etc. People self-educate all the time. Before showing how a network strategy would enhance these groups and practices, I will review one example of community self-education (see also my previous article on Camp Eureka, which in some ways suggested a network strategy).

Again, it is easy to see how Gramsci's idea of the struggle for socialist hegemony adopt militaristic metaphors: we must *combat* capitalist ideology, *struggle* against capitalists, *destroy* their hegemony, by recognising our *position* on *the terrain of ideologies.*

The first is M.A.Y.S.A.R. (Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport And Recreation). Owned and operated by community members and activists, the Fitzroy gym has suffered from a common problem of Indigenous organisations in Melbourne. In the recent dispute over Local Law 8 (public drinking), Yarra city council (with notable exceptions) attempted to bribe the gym to support its policy by offering money for necessary refurbishment. Government funding is always used to exercise ideological influence. Some have cited 3KND radio and the M.A.Y.A. healing centre. The schools are another obvious example ("We will provide this government grant, but you will buy the approved textbooks"). In recent months increasing numbers of particularly migrant youth, local to the area, have been making use of the gym's facilities. The modern urban landscape is quite prohibitive to many young people: everywhere you go, you need money, the confidence that comes with class and speaking the language of class, and that you be 18. Even where the young are allowed, they have no say over what rules prevail. M.A.Y.S.A.R. is providing a space for local youth where they can negotiate their own objectives, freely socialise, and receive the care and encouragement of elders. However, the gym is extremely short-staffed. Without additional funding, it will be impossible to make sure the kids are looked after all the time. I have seen the positive impact of an older member

of one's community. One of the gym's board members rushed in at one point as a kid went flying off the treadmill (where was I during all of this? Taking notes, obviously). There was no coercion: they were explained how the machines were to be used, and why they were used that way (safety). The boys then organised themselves amongst the machines and a hastily established a boxing ring, which the elder refereed. One of the younger boys must have got bored, because he helped us paint a banner instead. With enough caring adults around, M.A.Y.S.A.R. could have a tremendous impact on how these kids grow up.

How could M.A.Y.S.A.R. benefit from the creation of an educational network? A network would consist of the elements named above (collectives, parties, unions, etc) who agree to provide certain services or space for the wider community. M.A.Y.S.A.R. could offer a useful space for youth programs, including but not limited to use of the gym and experienced instruction. A network, by definition, includes a variety of people with a variety of skills and contributions to offer. It also includes access to other resources and facilities. There is a general perception that, when it comes to certain activities, the government shall provide. Education is one of these activities: but if we come to the conclusion that the education that government provides does not meet our needs, then we must find ways to make a new education ourselves. This is not to say, however, that the conquest of existing educational resources and, more importantly, student time, are not goals of revolutionary activity. Indeed, to do so would be to totally discard the work of those attempting to build a real education inside the existing system. Rather than proclaiming that hard-working students, teachers, community members, and education workers that are struggling to improve what goes on in the schools are wasting their efforts on a reformist course, we should include them in our network. Not only will they offer valuable resources and experience to the collective effort, but they must be part of any attempt to seize the schools for the construction of a truly democratic education.

From exile to self-government

LIKE MAO'S GUERILLAS, THE revolution begins in exile. We must develop the social infrastructure to run our own world without the resources controlled by the government, at first. Our goal is, of course, still a takeover of society, to turn its productive and cultural processes to our

democratically determined needs. But the nature of our takeover will be different from the Leninist model of a takeover. Where statists of all stripes seek to take over and recreate state power for, they assure us, good proletarian ends, we seek to dissolve the state. Anarchy, the free cooperation of collectives, federations, and individuals for mutually rewarding ends, is both our weapon and our goal. As we construct our network, we will create new forms of curriculum and pedagogy suited to our needs. The divorce between "book learning" and "real life learning" must be abolished: a geography lesson must be about understanding one's own urban environment; an English lesson must lead students towards confronting and understanding their world through the medium of text. But even as we build this new education in exile (not entirely, there are teachers within the system who are already proposing these ideas), we must adopt a strategy which will allow these pedagogies to infiltrate the school and, more importantly, the eight hours a day that young people must spend there. To help guide such a strategy, I propose the following goals. They are written for both activists and youth, which are not, of course, mutually exclusive categories. I make this distinction merely to remind well-meaning activists, as I must remember myself, that it is the task of the young to make the young people's revolution. We must act as a supportive network, providing material, political, and social resources wherever they are needed, and working to link up radical education projects. We must work towards:

As intermediary goals, I suggest the following:

1. An end to N.A.P.L.A.N. A ban on standardised testing, and eventually an end to hierarchical grading altogether. This can be supported by wildcat strike action by students and teachers (which has already started), sabotage (recall the case of a primary teacher "correcting" students' N.A.P.L.A.N. tests, and how that undermines the legitimacy of the test), and other forms of industrial action.
2. Control of curriculum must be devolved to student-teacher councils. The advice of outsiders may be consulted, but since students and teachers are the ones who must actually enact any proposed courses of study, they are the ones who must approve or deny them. Radicals acting outside the schools can support this by providing radical teaching materials (lesson plans, collections of sources, etc) and

politically advocating their use in schools. As my own contribution to this struggle, I will provide a radical lesson plan (which can be run either by teachers or by collectives seeking to educate themselves) in the next issue of *Melbourne Black*.

3. The provision of youth-controlled spaces. While some spaces exist in an ephemeral state (punk scenes, skate parks, the steps of the mall) the general orientation of the state is to destroy them or delegitimise them. One of the most vital tasks of education is to bring people up to cooperate with others and share resources fairly; it is only through the recognised control of space and resources that young people can learn these skills. Activists should support youth rights, oppose discriminatory measures against young people (bans on hoodies or young people congregating in shops, surveillance equipment being placed to monitor the young), and defend youth spaces.
4. As I have said, the youth revolution is the task of the youth. If we are serious about our call for the young to begin participating in running their own education, we cannot impose conditions on them. While, as always, we can hold a dialogue about what the appropriate goals and methods for radical education are, we must allow youth autonomy. Governments and autocratic school administrations are fond of hand-picked panels of "student leaders," and proudly call it student democracy. Fuck that. It is the place of students to decide what are worthy purposes for their efforts and what constitutes appropriate behaviour. These are responsibilities that anyone must learn to participate in society; most students today learn much less. ◆

Bibliography

Forgacs, D. (ed.), *The Antonio Gramsci Reader,* 2000.

Illich, I., *Deschooling Society,* 2002.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C., *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* 2001.

SELECTIONS FROM THE NEW DEVIL'S DICTIONARY.

BY ANTI-HERO

Australia, n.

1. The only reason you need: *Asking questions is very un-Australian.*

Common Good, n.

1. The self-interest of elites:
We had to use taxpayer money to subsidise the diamond-studded ivory backscratcher industry in the interests of the common good.

Cynic, n.

1. One who doesn't believe everything they're told:
Dude, you are so cynical. Don't you know the corporations are our friends?

Extremist, n.

1. Anyone to the left of Tony Blair: *You must be one of those liberal extremists.*

Flexible, n.

1. Broken:
The workers went on strike but we broke the union and then we broke their spirits, and afterwards we found them to be much more flexible and accommodating.
See also: Human resource.

Jobs, n.

1. What every politician invokes every time they want to defend the system of private accumulation, which is based not on the jobs motive but on the profit motive:
The government is very concerned about protecting jobs.
See also: Representative democracy.

Money, n.

1. A prehistoric fetish that makes fat, pompous bores attractive:
I hate people who don't appreciate the genius of Ayn Rand too. What a remarkable coincidence.

Normal, n.

1. Whatever brand of madness you have internalised:
Johnny found the world where some people had more stuff than they needed and other people didn't have enough quite normal.

Poofter, n.

1. One who provides an argument against something you believe based on empirical logic derived from evidence rather than emotive conjecture derived from preconceived prejudice:
That poofter thinks he's so clever with all that book-learning and all those big words and all those fancy-pants facts.

Representative Democracy, n.

1. The illusion of choice and the reality of a novel and unprecedented form of social control in which centre-right and far-right factions of a single-party state representing society's dominant moneyed interests masquerade as a two-party state and take turns fleecing the public, who are in turn granted the privilege of choosing the method of their fleecing—the carrot or the stick:
I voted for the millionaire from the Left.

Security, n.

1. That which politicians dangling evil bogeymen in our faces promise us in exchange for our freedom. Those who exchange liberty for security deserve neither.

2. A state in which everyone is very nervous, anxious and afraid and feels compelled to cling to authoritarian strongmen who they hope will save them from evil:
I was feeling very nervous so I voted for the guy who said he would protect me from the bogeyman de jure. ◆

TROTWATCH.

BY MICHAEL

Rating system: scores are given out of five icepicks. The more thoroughly disheartening are given lower scores than stories of a humorous nature.

Saturday, 1st May, 2010, Socialist Alternative (SAlt) 'Celebration of May Day' public meeting.

Edgar Paez, Liaison Officer of Colombia's Sinaltrainal Union, has been in Melbourne campaigning for the boycott of Coca-Cola products. He asks we support this boycott as a measure of solidarity with his union's struggles against Coca-Cola and their use of assassins and paramilitaries to kill Sinaltrainal members.

Edgar was asked on the day to speak at the SAlt May Day public meeting, which he agreed to do. He was accompanied by a member of l.a.s.net and a member of the Socialist Party. On entry of said Socialist Party comrade, certain members of SAlt requested he leave their public meeting. Discussion and conflict ensued. During this time, several members of SAlt prudently removed the Coca-Cola they had had on sale to raise party funds. In time, the class enemy was successfully ejected from the meeting, and thus Edgar spoke only to those with the correct theoretical perspective. Victory to the workers!

Sunday, 2nd May, 2010, May Day rally

Young newspaper seller approaches elder man to make the sales pitch.

"Would you like to purchase a copy of Socialist Alternative?"

"No thanks, I'm a Marxist-Leninist."

"But we are a Marxist-Leninist party!"

"No you're not, you're Trots."

Elderly man walks away casually.

MUSIC AND POLITICS.

BY JAMES

It's interesting to ponder when I first started to realise that we could question the state of affairs we're in. Beyond being the teenage rebel who refuses to listen to his/her mum/dad telling them to clean their room, there is a realisation at some point that there are things going on bigger than one's self which require different solutions.

I remember listening to the first Rage Against the Machine album when I was 12. It was like any other afternoon after school with my cousin, but for hearing the first brutal "Fuck you I wont do want you tell me." It was all the words you're not meant to hear. As we listened through the album the anti-establishment message blasted through the speakers and seeped into our young minds forever. I wonder for how many others is was music that drew them in or made it seem okay to question the nature of Capitalism or our understanding of it at the time.

If writing the perfect revolutionary song was all we needed to overthrow capitalism wouldn't life be so much easier? Alas, no, we must fight on.

Dead Prez's M1. Photo by Thomas Good.

bit.ly/7w8Qxp

Here I want to take up some of your time to explore the role of left wing art and music and its relationship with how we organise in Melbourne today. The personal relationships that music has with us are really important. How can we communicate to each other? Our voices are many and varied and need to be heard however they are expressed. The formats of a lot of meetings on the left don't leave a lot of room for creativity. Why are we not using the amazing creative juices inside us to create and inspire? We are forever talking about creating a world free from the wage slavery, one where workers can (just have) have the time and inspiration to free their minds to love, learn and create. We need to start here and now! How can we be advocating for this 'New Society' without trying to have fun and be creative along the way?

One of the most effective combinations of music and politics is benefit gigs for political causes. Earlier this year Renegade Activists organised a couple of fundraisers and I want to talk a little about some of the simple ways of organising them. I will focus here on the most successful one, both for the campaign and personally: the Invasion Day performance at Trades Hall, including an appearance from Dead Prez' M1.

It's fair to say we were interested in seeing Dead Prez live, but getting them to play a benefit show seemed like a fantasy (considering they'd

never been to Australia for a start). One afternoon in a beer fuelled haze on the veranda at the Trades Hall bar, Joe and I were trying to work out how we could finance Dead Prez coming to Australia to do some shows, the next day I read that Dead Prez had been added to the Big Day Out line-up! I can't say that all it took was to ask them and **wham!** here is the D.P. show. It took a lot of emails, patience, phone calls, giving up, re-trying just to get some confidence in pulling something off. Having the belief that what you are doing will work is the first and most important aspect of organising. Too often we don't aim high enough, we already have venues, promoters, poster designers we the left need to use our community to support each other and anything is possible. If you believe in what you are doing those you are getting to help you will as well.

As with the organisers of most big events the Big Day Out imposes stipulations on artists about playing other shows, so we couldn't have D.P. playing. We had to find another way to use Dead Prez and their political message. What we got was MI giving a talk about racism, resistance and hip hop. To have a night of live local hip hop on Invasion Day, mixed with some great political chats by MI and local Indigenous activist Robbie Thorpe, made it a really special night.

For me this relationship between music and politics is epitomised in the music of self-proclaimed revolutionary-but-gangstas, Dead Prez. From the first thumping beats of Dead Prez's 'Hip Hop' I was hooked, and as with all artists I love, I try and get as many others on board. Every party I went to had D.P. on the stereo, great beats to dance to and with lyrics like: "We need a revolution the system ain't gunna change" it's teaching the people how to pimp the system, to fight back and organise.

Too often we don't aim high enough, we already have venues, promoters, poster designers we the left need to use our community to support each other and anything is possible. If you believe in what you are doing those you are getting to help you will as well.

Money is money and it certainly helps a campaign to be able to sustain itself. Though it seems that Benefit gigs are just about raising money but it's not just about the money, really there are lots of ways to raise money. What

you should be aiming to get out of a benefit gig is an opportunity to raise more awareness of the cause, invigorate activists to keep fighting and showcase the talents of those performing.

The telling of our stories of struggle is so vital to showcase to let people know they are not alone in their feelings of discontent with the world. Its one thing for music to introduce or reintroduce people to politics but it's not enough to just listen. We've got to throw ourselves into the movement, benefit gigs offer an opportunity to do this combining the passion of the music with an action to partake in.

The first point is asking people to be involved, this might seem very simple but you never know how far fetched an idea is if you keep it in your head. Dreams can only be realised once they are tried and trialled in practice. I love music; there is hardly a moment in my day that I'm not listening. Its powers are magical. It can transform your mood, help you find love on the dance floor or give you that boost you need to carry on being a revolutionary soldier. Hopefully this is the start of a regular discussion on these ideas if you have any comments, experiences or questions send them in. ◆

Renegade Activists will be continuing to combine music and politics if you want to give us a hand or you have some ideas please do: renegadeactivist@gmail.com

If you want to know more about organising benefit gigs Dave Rovics (we are doing a show with him in early August) has a great piece on his website:

tinyurl.com/2cq9y3n